

whole, as the case may be, the world, whether Christian or non-Christian, believing or unbelieving, has been laid under obligations of ceaseless and insolvent gratitude. Verily, there are no persons so credulous as the unbelieving; there is nothing so probable and so credible as the unexpected and the impossible; there is nothing more abhorrent to nature than the supernatural. But, given these two factors, God and revelation, and it is hard to see how we can dispense with the supernatural. Certain it is that we must strike the balance between probabilities; and the question in this case is whether, if God has given an actual revelation, He is more likely to have given it through deception and fraud than by miracle and prophecy; whether, if He sent His Son, Christ, to be born of a virgin, to die the death of a malefactor, and to rise again from the dead, that Son, Christ Jesus, is more likely to have misunderstood and misapplied the Scriptures, to which He appealed as furnishing part of the credentials of His mission, than He is to have placed them on their true and legitimate basis as the Word of the Father from whom He came, and the work of the Spirit whom He promised to send; and whether, if this is really the purpose for which He claimed them, it is in any sense probable that their actual origin and growth is after the manner and with the result that has been proposed, which is inconsistent with prophecy and rejects miracle; and whether, after all, if there is any actual utterance of God to man, any voice of the Father speaking to the heart of His children, it is not more probable that He prepared them for the full-toned utterance of that voice, in sundry times and in divers manners, by marvellous history, by stupendous miracle, by dark and unintelligible prophecy, till He spake by man's voice in the substance of human flesh, not without mighty works and potent prophecies, than that He left men to discover as best they could the traces of His will through records and writings partly defective, partly distorted, and more than half untrue, and which, if they had any reference to His Son, only had it by accident, of which He falsely and ignorantly availed Himself.

STANLEY LEATHES.

ART. IV.—THE “INDEMONSTRABLE PRINCIPLE” OF
CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS.

THE contest between the philosophy of faith and that of unbelief—between those who accept a Divine revelation upon reasonable and sufficient evidence and those who reject every truth which is incapable of actual demonstration,

although lying beyond the domain of science or general experience—is a very ancient one, and one which has passed through many stages of development during the long history of our faith. By none of the great champions of Christianity in its earliest history has the defence of a revelation on sound philosophic principles been so successfully maintained as by Clement of Alexandria in his "Stromata," a title which represents our modern term "Miscellany." In the seventh and eighth books of this collection, which, as its name indicates, does not lay claim to any systematic arrangement, the writer concentrates his attention on the distinction between the true philosophy of the primitive type and the sceptical philosophy which succeeded it, and in later ages even superseded it, and lays down the necessity of admitting some first principle which is indemonstrable as the basis of a solid philosophy—a necessity which presents itself even in the exact sciences which have their only sure starting-point in definitions, postulates, or axioms. Clement begins his eighth book with pointing out this contrast between the primitive and the later philosophies.

"The most ancient philosophers," he writes, "were not driven to disputation and doubt; nor are we ourselves who embrace the really true philosophy. . . . But the more recent philosophers of the Greeks, from an empty and aimless vain-glory, through argument and contention were betrayed into a useless trifling. On the other hand, our barbarian [*i.e.*, Christian] philosophy, casting out all contention, saith, 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, ask and it shall be given you.' . . . And on those who thus make inquiry according to the Scriptures by which they walk, the gift of a Divine and comprehensive knowledge is bestowed by God by means of an enlightened search."

Clement traces here the line which divides the philosophy, which begins its investigations from fixed and definite principles, from that captious philosophy which, by failing to build on any solid foundation, ends in a chaos of universal doubt and scepticism. The most remarkable instance of this latter kind of reasoning, and one which must have been in the mind of Clement at this time, was the attack of Celsus upon Christianity, which has been the text-book of every subsequent sceptic, and which had its fullest development in the work of Strauss.

Celsus complains that some Christians, neither willing to give or receive a reason about the things they believe, "use this, 'Do not examine but believe, and thy faith will save thee.'" It is easy to trace the source of this calumny. Even the simplest Christian was able to see that he had no common ground with an adversary who absolutely rejected the principle

of faith, and regarded the miracles which formed one of the chief supports of his own faith as not only incredible but impossible. The plea in behalf of faith was misinterpreted by Celsus in order to show that reason had no part in the Christian system. But Celsus must have known that reason had already fulfilled her part and satisfied her claims by a careful examination of the evidence by which the doctrine of Christ was established.

This is well expressed in the words of Clement we have just cited, who gives the true version of the charge advanced by the contemptuous philosopher.

The learned and judicious Mr. Glas, in his "Notes on the Discourse of Celsus," observes on this passage :

We are as certain of some things known only by faith as of anything we know by reasoning and experience, and in our daily practice we proceed upon faith as confidently as upon any of the other two, and with as good success. It would, therefore, be most ridiculous to deny that faith is a way of knowing, competent to the mind of man. And it is no less absurd to demand reasoning in the place of faith than it would be to require hearing from the eye, or sight from the ear. Such is the demand of the philosopher to admit of no knowledge but what is properly called science, and his complaint of Christians as not willing to know the things of faith by reasoning, as if he had found fault with them because they would not hear with their eyes. The Christians then were perfectly in the right not to give or take a reason for the things to be known by faith ; and as to these things they said truly and most justly, "Do not examine but believe" (Works of Mr. Glas, vol. iv., p. 378).

But they had to the fullest extent admitted the claims and satisfied the demands of reason in judging and determining the evidence upon which their faith so securely rested. When they accepted the testimony of prophets and Apostles, and the record of the teaching of Christ, which their testimony has bequeathed to the Church, they entered upon the province of faith and acknowledged the Scriptures, in the words of Clement, as a first and indemonstrable principle—an *ἀναπόδεικτος ἀρχή*. The difficulties and discrepancies which might have perplexed their reason during the progress of their conversion became then the trials of their faith rather than obstacles in the way of it. Their principal object was then to clear up and reconcile all the apparent differences, the *ἀντικειμένα* of the sacred text,¹ rather than to make them the means of overthrowing their first principle and consenting to surrender to the fascination of a captious and unreasonable criticism the claims and demands of a reasoning and reasonable faith. Those who, like Clement, Tatian and others of the Alexandrian

¹ Many attempts of this kind are to be found among the early writers. Among others Julian of Toledo wrote a work bearing the title *Ἀντικειμένα* which some have erroneously attributed to Junilius Africanus.

school, had passed from the teaching of the early philosophy to the higher teaching of Christ, had already recognised the necessity of securing some first principle as the foundation of all their search after truth. They were not passing out of a chaos of vague scepticism and trackless speculation when they accepted, as a first principle, the authority of Christ as a teacher, and the Scriptures which represented His Divine teaching. The words of Clement are here very suggestive. "We have," he writes, "as a first principle (*ἀρχή*) of our teaching, the Lord, 'at sundry times and in divers manners,' leading us from the beginning to the end of our knowledge through the Prophets, through the Gospel, and through the blessed Apostles. If anyone should deem it necessary to find another first principle, it could not be truly regarded as such. In God, as inherently faithful (*ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ πιστός*) in His Scriptures and Word, we justly put faith, operating as it does for the benefit of mankind. We use this reasonably as the criterion for the discovering of other things. Now everything that is judged is not believed until it is judged, for that is not a first principle which has need of judgment. Justly, therefore, when we have embraced by faith the indemonstrable principle (*ἀναπόδεικτος ἀρχή*), and have abundantly derived our demonstrations concerning this principle from the principle itself (*ἀπόδειξεις παρ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς λαβοντες*), by the voice of the Lord we are educated into the knowledge of the truth" (l. vii., c. 16).

This passage is a very valuable one from many points of view. For while it places the Scriptures as they were delivered to us from the first on the supreme throne of Christian teaching, they dissipate the foolish sophistries of those who, confounding their authority with their authenticity, place the Church before and above them. An earthly monarch, when his legitimacy is clearly proved, enters at once upon his supreme authority, and those who have judicially tested that authority become at once subject to it. Thus the Church, when she had established the authenticity of the Scriptures, at once submitted to their authority and accepted it as supreme. The case of the rediscovery of the former law is exactly parallel to the reception of the latter one. Its authenticity once established, both the king and the rulers, the priests and the people, gave it their entire submission and allegiance. Clement is himself as careful to prove the authenticity of the Scriptures as he is, after that proof, to assert their authority. In another very remarkable passage he charges the heretics of his day with the corruption and mutilation of the sacred text: "First, they do not receive all the Scriptures—then imperfect versions—and not as the

body and context of the prophecy require; but choosing out ambiguous passages, they draw them out to meet their own opinions, gathering from them a few scattered words, not considering their true meaning, but applying them in their literal sense."

If the words of Clement had been written in our day, they could not have better expressed the course of the advocate of the modern school of biblical criticism. For the critic of this school admits of no indemonstrable principle, no fundamental doctrine on which he can build up a superstructure of strength and symmetry. He begins, indeed, by destroying the foundations of faith, and carries on to the very last the work of disintegration. The great ideal of St. Augustine in the grandest work which the earlier centuries of our faith ever produced, his treatise "On the City of God," is reversed by the high school of modern criticism, the Kuenens, the Wellhausens, and their too-numerous disciples. The foundation-stones are violently torn out to place them on the top of their ideal building; the history of the Patriarchal Church vanishes in myths and legends; the law is detached from its ancient place to be put in a higher part of the building than that of the prophets; the historical books are post-dated in order to destroy their authority—everything is confounded and turned backwards *πάντα πάλιν στρέφεται*. Yet the wanderers in this maze of conjecture not only lose themselves, but meet only to oppose one another; while the more timid speculator hesitates to accompany his bolder companion to the end of his fruitless journey, in the hope that he may yet save a fragment of his former faith to serve for a new foundation. Professor Robertson Smith, in his preface to Wellhausen's "History of Israel," admits that the modern "historical criticism has made many false and uncertain steps." The Christian inquirer who remembers the indispensable moral qualifications which his Divine Master has laid down for the discovery of the truth, cannot but regard the pride of intellect and the almost supercilious contempt for the traditions of the most venerable and primitive antiquity which are displayed in the writings of Kuenen, Wellhausen, and more recently by their English disciple, Professor Cheyne, as presenting serious obstacles to the reception of their destructive theories.

While we readily admit the skill, the ingenuity, and the elaborate research which are exhibited by the propounders of the new theories, and which are specially exhibited in the kind of anatomical demonstration to which they have subjected the ancient Scriptures, we cannot but entertain the conviction that if the same qualities had been displayed in establishing the unity and integrity of the sacred volume, very

different results would have presented themselves. We see in all their labours the absence of the one great requisite for the study of God's Word, the honest and good heart, prepared, as St. Hilary says, to bring back more from the Word of God than it brings to it—rather anxious to discover methods of reconciling discrepancies than prove them irreconcilable. The Christian, however, when he receives the Scriptures on that kind of evidence on which the Church for eighteen centuries has received them, acknowledges them with Clement to be a *principium indemonstrabile*—a criterion by which he is to judge all else—rather than a work of human origin and doubtful authority, on which he is himself to sit in judgment. Tatian declares that the reading of the Scriptures led to his conversion to Christianity. He approached them in the spirit of a true philosophy, and was at once impressed with their moral excellence and beauty. “I was persuaded by them,” he writes, “from the modesty of their style, from the artlessness of the writers, from their natural explanation of the creation of the universe, from their prophetic foresight, from the excellency of their precepts, and from the monarchy of the world which they proclaimed.”¹ A faith thus originated places its possessor on so far higher a platform than that of the mere critic, that there is no common ground for controversy, no battle-field in which the believer and the infidel can meet on equal terms. But even to those who have not yet acquired the precious gift of faith, the arbitrary dismemberment of the body of the Scriptures, in order to assign to a number of imaginary beings, who exist only in the mind of the critic, the authorship of its various parts, must seem an act of audacity unequalled in the history even of secular and modern literature. For in this we might have some external evidence to assist us, some proof lying outside the work itself, and corroborating the testimony arising from its internal features. But in the Pentateuch, the Law and the Prophets, we have a work which can have no such outward illustration. The ancient Scriptures stand unique and alone, like the prehistoric monuments of architecture and art, and are incapable of comparison with any other work. The capricious division of them, according to some conjectural light existing only in the mind of the writer, is obviously, therefore, an act of the boldest assumption. The great diversity of opinion among those engaged in this work of disintegration, and the gradual multiplication of their conjectural authors, must make every reasonable mind hesitate ere it can entrust itself to such conflicting guides, and surrender to their plausible systems

¹ *Con. Græcos Oratio*, c. 29.

traditions which only yield in antiquity to the writings themselves, and, at all events, have the merit of clearness and consistency. No sooner was the first division of authorship—that of the Elohist and Jehovistic writer—laid down as a first principle, than a subdivision of both of them began, and we were introduced to two or three Jehovistic writers, to which are now added a priestly author of later date, and a variety of subordinate entities. We are first taught that the Elohist writer gave the text to the subsequent Jehovist, who expanded and supplemented his narrative. Now we find that the theory is reversed. The Jehovist is discovered to be the older writer. Thus Graf, in a letter to Kuenen in 1866, writes: "Vous me faites pressentir une solution de cette énigme . . . c'est que les parties élohistiques de la Genèse seraient postérieures aux parties jéhovistiques."¹

It is upon such shifting sands as these that the new theorists are walking, prophesying after their own spirit, and having no clear perception of any of the facts which they lay down with such supreme self-satisfaction. And the reason that they are only able to make guesses after truth is clearly this: that they are unable to arrive at any first principle, or to follow the wiser example of the early Christian philosopher, who, having fully investigated the claims of the ancient Scriptures and the evidence they gave to his faith, accepted them as a *principium indemonstrabile*, and made them his criterion of religious truth as well as a guide of his daily life and practice. Nor is the inquirer who proceeds upon this safe path and starts from this sure first principle daunted by the difficulties and discrepancies which present themselves in the subordinate facts and features of the sacred narrative; as these, arising naturally from the different points of view occupied by the writers, or from the obscurities of language or other causes inevitable in the case of writings transmitted to us from the remotest ages, may, by a careful and prayerful study, become capable of reconciliation, and give a stimulus to a higher curiosity. The late Cardinal Wiseman drew a beautiful picture of the difference between religious truth as seen from within and from without the sanctuary of faith, comparing the one to the stained glass of the windows of a stately cathedral as they appear externally, a chaos of fragments without light or order, while to those who are within the building the design of the artist is shown in its fullest beauty and most exquisite symmetry. As the morning or evening beam brings out its forms and colours in all their depth and richness, all that is broken and fragmentary becomes then but the contribution to the

¹ Wellhausen, p. 89, note, ed. 1885.

unity of the whole work, and falls into perfect harmony of form and colour with all that surrounds it. We cease to have any desire to spend our time and talents in criticising the features of irregularity and disunion which the exterior of the sacred books presents, and find it our chief pleasure, as well as our most urgent duty, to endeavour to reconcile their difficulties, and study the Scriptures in the light which is reflected upon them by the Spirit of God, which alone can fully clear up their meaning and exhibit their true proportions. That the Divine revelation went through a process of development from the days of Moses to that of the last of the prophets, that, during this process, it incorporated into itself many archaic and sometimes fragmentary elements which naturally and necessarily had a different form and structure to those of the later writings in which they were embodied, is sufficient to account for the differences of style and diction which it would otherwise be impossible to explain. But this process of development is rather internal than from without; it has been beautifully described by Vincent of Lerins in the well-known words:

“*Crescat igitur oportet, et multum vehementerque proficiat tam singulorum, quam omnium, tam unius hominis quam totius ecclesiæ ætatum ac sæculorum gradibus, intelligentiâ, scientiâ, sapientiâ; sed in suo dumtaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eâdemque sententiâ. . . . Fas est enim ut prisca illa cœlestis philosophiæ dogmata, processu temporis excurentur, limentur, poliantur; sed nefas est ut commutentur, nefas ut detruncentur, ut mutilentur. Accipiant licet evidentiam lucem, distinctionem, sed retineant necesse est, plenitudinem, integritatem, proprietatem.*”¹

ROBERT C. JENKINS.



ART. V.—THE TRAGEDY OF SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

PROBABLY at no period of our history were scandals more rife than during the reign of James I. Mrs. Hutchinson calls the Court “a nursery of lust and intemperance, and every great house in the country a sty of uncleanness;” this is the view of a Puritan writer, but that there was a good deal of truth in it there are abundant facts to prove. Wilson tells us that the “streets of London swarmed day and night with bloody quarrels,” and we are not likely to forget the picture of

¹ *Common.*, l. i., c. 28, 30.